

## Gastronomic tourism: A case study of ecofeminism in local food promotion

Silvania Stella Epiphania Mandaru <sup>1\*</sup>, Emanuel Sowe Leuape <sup>1</sup>, Fitria Titi Meilawati <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Department of Communication Science, Universitas Nusa Cendana, Kota Kupang, Nusa Tenggara Timur

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### Abstract

Gastronomic tourism is a growing sector that intertwines cultural heritage, local food promotion, and sustainable practices. In this context, ecofeminism explores the intersection of environmental sustainability and gender roles, emphasizing women's contributions to food-related traditions. Mollo District, in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, presents a compelling case where women play a vital role in promoting local gastronomy. This study aims to analyse the role of women within the ecofeminist framework in promoting local food to support gastronomic tourism in Mollo District. The research adopts a qualitative approach using a case study method. Data is collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis, focusing on women's involvement in local food production and promotion. Key findings are, firstly, women play a crucial role in developing gastronomic tourism through their expertise in domestic tasks, particularly cooking and household management. Secondly, their traditional knowledge and culinary skills align with ecofeminist perspectives, reinforcing their significance in local food sustainability. Lastly, the successful development of Mollo's gastronomic tourism depends on strengthening human resources, particularly among women, to enhance their contribution to the sector. The implications are recognizing and supporting women's roles in local food promotion can enhance sustainable gastronomic tourism in Mollo District. Furthermore, capacity-building initiatives and policy support are essential to empower women as key agents in tourism development. **Keywords:** Gastronomic Tourism, Ecofeminism, Local Food Promotion, Mollo District.

### Introduction

Gastronomic tourism has emerged as a significant driver of sustainable economic and cultural development, particularly in regions rich in culinary heritage. The Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), with its diverse natural beauty and cultural wealth, has been recognized as a potential tourism hub in Indonesia. Due to its rich cultural and natural resources, NTT has been identified as an emerging tourist destination, particularly following its designation as a leading tourism area in Eastern Indonesia in 2007. Additionally, as Indonesia's southernmost province, NTT serves as a strategic tourism-based gateway to the Asia-Pacific region

The Mollo people, a subgroup of the larger Timorese cultural group, reside in the mountainous region near Mount Mutis, an area known for its agricultural productivity. The Mollo people have historically engaged in subsistence agriculture, a system in which agricultural production is primarily for household consumption rather than commercial sale. This practice includes cultivating diverse crops and livestock, and ensuring food security for local communities (Yudiarini, 2011). Given the significance of agricultural heritage in the region, integrating these traditional practices into the gastronomic tourism framework presents a unique opportunity to promote sustainable and community-driven tourism (Titu Eki & Dewi, 2020).

A key challenge in NTT's tourism development is the underrepresentation of women's contributions to local food promotion. Women in Mollo District, East Nusa Tenggara, play a crucial role in sustaining and transmitting culinary traditions, yet their participation remains overlooked in mainstream tourism strategies. Existing research on gastronomic tourism has predominantly focused on its economic benefits and consumer experiences, often overlooking the critical intersections of gender roles, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. While studies have explored sustainable practices and the significance of gastronomic heritage, there remains a notable gap in addressing how these elements intertwine with gender dynamics and environmental concerns. For

\*Corresponding Author:

E-mail: [frenymandaru@gmail.com](mailto:frenymandaru@gmail.com)

instance, [Alberto, et al \(2024\)](#) discuss the importance of sustainable practices in gastronomic tourism, such as using local ingredients and environmentally friendly cooking techniques, but do not delve into gender-related aspects. Similarly, research on the gastronomic heritage of ethnic groups in Vojvodina highlights its significance for tourism development and cultural preservation but lacks an examination of gender roles in this context ([Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2023](#)).

Moreover, studies on sustainable urban food tourism emphasize the balance between global and local influences to achieve sustainability outcomes, yet they do not specifically address the role of gender or environmental stewardship ([Stalmirska & Ali, 2023](#)). These examples illustrate the existing literature's focus on the economic and cultural facets of gastronomic tourism, underscoring the need for research that integrates gender perspectives and environmental sustainability into this field.

This gap highlights the need for a study that integrates ecofeminist perspectives to understand the role of women in promoting sustainable gastronomic tourism. This research aims to address this gap by exploring how ecofeminist principles manifest in the local food practices of Mollo women and their contributions to the tourism sector. Specifically, it seeks to First, identify the roles of women in local food promotion. Secondly, examine how ecofeminist values align with their practices, and thirdly assess the potential for integrating these contributions into a broader tourism framework. By doing so, this study provides a critical lens for recognizing and leveraging women's roles in sustainable tourism development.

Ecofeminism, a theoretical approach that links ecological concerns with feminist thought, provides a valuable framework for understanding women's roles in gastronomic tourism. The relationship between environmental issues and feminism is deeply intertwined and deserves attention. Environmental crises disproportionately affect women, as they often bear the primary responsibility for sustaining family life, particularly in securing food. Within patriarchal systems, women are traditionally expected to manage and serve meals while also caring for their families and children ([Bhasin, 1993](#); [DeVault, 1991](#); [Hooks, 2014](#); [Walby, 1990](#)).

This study expands on ecofeminist principles by situating them within the context of local food promotion in the Mollo District. Mollo women's engagement in food production, preparation, and knowledge transmission reflects ecofeminist ideals in multiple ways. First, their expertise in utilizing locally sourced, seasonal ingredients aligns with ecofeminism's emphasis on ecological balance and sustainability ([Mies & Shiva, 1993](#)). Second, their role in preserving indigenous culinary traditions challenges dominant tourism narratives that often commercialize and standardize local food cultures ([Merchant, 1983](#)). Lastly, the collective efforts of women in food-related enterprises foster community resilience and empowerment, demonstrating ecofeminist principles in action ([Gaard, 2011](#); [Salleh, 1997](#)). By bridging ecofeminist discourse with gastronomic tourism, this study highlights how Mollo women's contributions extend beyond domestic labor to shaping a sustainable tourism model. Recognizing these intersections provides a foundation for policy recommendations that support women's agency in cultural and economic development through food tourism

## Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative research method with a case study type. This study employs a qualitative research method, specifically a case study approach, which enables a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the issues under investigation. A case study methodology allows researchers to maintain a holistic perspective while focusing on the contextual nuances of the subject matter.

A total of eleven informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of individuals with relevant knowledge and experience. This sample consists of one expert informant, whose specialized insights provide a theoretical and contextual foundation, and ten key informants, who offer practical and experiential perspectives critical to the study. The selection of this number of informants ensures a balanced representation of expertise and lived experiences, facilitating a thorough analysis of the research topic.

Data collection methods included direct observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires, and documentation review. The data analysis process involved

systematic examination, reduction, and validation, with triangulation techniques applied to enhance credibility and reliability.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Mollo Ecofeminism and Women Empowerment.**

The topic of women's empowerment in the local food promotion sector is a crucial area of research, particularly from an ecofeminist perspective. Women's empowerment encompasses multiple dimensions, including: Firstly, social empowerment: access to information, knowledge, skills, social organizations, and financial resources. Secondly, political empowerment: participation in decision-making processes that shape their futures. And lastly, psychological empowerment: the development of self-confidence and self-efficacy (Kurniawanto & Anggraini, 2019).

The findings about women's role in local food promotion in Mollo are as follows: Mollo, in South Central Timor Regency, is a key supplier of agricultural commodities. Fertile lands support local food cultivation, with two primary variants. First, cultivated local food which are grown in gardens for subsistence, including vegetables, tubers, grains, and fruits. And second, wild-harvested food, which naturally occurs in forests, such as tree and rock honey, harvested by local communities. Mollo women play a critical role in food processing, which extends beyond subsistence to economic opportunities. The region's culinary diversity has potential for development as a gastronomic tourism attraction. However, traditional gender roles position women primarily within domestic spaces, limiting their access to the public and economic spheres.

Analysis on ecofeminist perspectives on women and nature are Ecofeminism explores the intersection of gender and environmental exploitation, arguing that patriarchal structures subjugate both women and nature (Nkechi & Emmanuel, 2017). Mollo's patriarchal society assigns public roles to men, while women manage household affairs, including food production. However, as local food becomes an economic asset, the need for women's empowerment in tourism and entrepreneurship grows. The empowerment of Mollo women involves developing competencies in food tourism, marketing, and public engagement. This aligns with ecofeminist thought, which emphasizes reciprocity, nurturing, and cooperative relationships between women and nature (Cuomo, 1998). Women's involvement in the food economy supports both environmental sustainability and gender equality.

### **Mollo Local Food Varieties as Gastronomic Tourism Potential.**

Mollo is a traditional territory located at the foot of Mount Mutis, a region with fertile land that supports thriving agricultural activities. The Mollo community has a strong connection to farming, land ownership, and the processing of natural products. Agricultural knowledge and practices have been passed down for generations, ensuring sustainable food production.

Among the three traditional areas in TTS Regency (Mollo, Amanatun, and Amanuban), Mollo is the primary supplier of agricultural commodities. It's rich soil enables the cultivation of diverse local food varieties, which can be categorized into two types: cultivated food crops that are intentionally grown in gardens or home plots for subsistence purposes, including vegetables, tubers, grains, and fruits. And wild food sources that grow naturally in the forest and are harvested for daily consumption. Examples include tree honey and stone honey, which local communities collect using traditional methods.

Beyond cultivation, the Mollo people have developed creative ways to process and prepare food, making their culinary traditions unique. The diversity of Mollo's local cuisine holds potential for gastronomic tourism, offering visitors an immersive experience in an agricultural community. Local food cultivation and preparation methods showcase sustainable practices and cultural heritage.

Some of the key local food ingredients in Mollo, which are being incorporated into gastronomic tourism, include Corn, Rice, Sweet Potato, Cassava, Keladi, Banana, Pumpkin, Ginger, Turmeric, Coffee Beans, Coconut, Shallots, Banana, Wax Gourd, Japanese Gourd, Garlic, Papaya, Potatoes, Peanuts, Red Beans, Arbila Beans, and many others. Below is the picture of some of the local ingredients found :



Figure 1. Mollo Mainstay Food Varieties  
Source : Author, 2023

Most local food varieties produced by the Mollo people have been inherited from their ancestors and continue to be cultivated today. However, several plant varieties are now considered nearly extinct due to a significant decline in cultivation. One particularly interesting variant is the Arbila bean. This bean is not cultivated but grows naturally in forested areas. For the Mollo people, Arbila beans serve as a food source during times of famine and are used as an alternative when their main food sources are scarce.

Today, Arbila beans are rarely found on the dinner tables of the Mollo people. The younger generation explains that this forest nut is primarily processed and consumed by the older generation. Additionally, the beans are difficult to access because they grow in the forest, and their processing is time-consuming, leading to fewer Mollo people incorporating them into their daily diets.



Figure 2. Women Of Mollo With Cooked Arbila Beans  
Source : Author, 2023

Interestingly, the local food cultivation activities in Mollo are covered with traditional wisdom in the form of customary traditional practices. As stated by one of the participants:

“In the past, agricultural activities in Mollo were deeply intertwined with traditional rituals. Before planting, a ceremony was held to seek blessings from nature and ancestors for a bountiful harvest. Similarly, before harvesting, rituals were performed to express gratitude for the abundance received. However, over time, these traditions have faded. Modernization and the lack of cultural transmission to younger generations have contributed to their decline. To preserve Mollo’s rich cultural heritage, it is crucial to maintain these rituals as a vital part of the community’s identity” (Interviewed on March 23, 2023).

The Mollo people are a community of mountain dwellers who have inherited agricultural practices related to both cultivation and the gathering of natural products. These agricultural practices encompass beliefs, values, norms, knowledge, customs, habits, and traditional methods

that are integrated into all agricultural activities. As an agricultural society, the Mollo people embrace a specific agricultural culture as a form of local wisdom that they are committed to preserving. This local wisdom reflects their understanding that they do not solely rely on natural products for their livelihoods but also have a responsibility to protect their natural environment.

There is a balance between gathering natural products and engaging in cultivation, ensuring the sustainability of their surroundings. These agricultural practices help to limit human tendencies toward over-exploitation of nature. The agricultural activities of the Mollo people demonstrate a reciprocal relationship with nature and their ancestors. They recognize that the abundance of natural products they harvest is a result of nature's generosity and the blessings of their forebears. For example, in Ajaobaki Village, the practice of banana cultivation includes a ritual where the Mollo people say the phrase "*Teneonet ta ekot fan*" (next year we will meet again) while pointing the tip of the banana shoot toward the ground before replanting it. This ritual illustrates the Mollo people's communication with nature, reflecting their desire for a successful harvest in the coming season.

Their interaction with nature is also evident in how they interpret natural phenomena. For instance, they believe that planting "*Bok Nono*" (wax gourd) during a lightning storm will result in rotting fruit upon harvest. This belief can be understood scientifically, as lightning typically indicates imminent rain. Furthermore, if wax gourd seeds are submerged in water, they are thought to produce deformed fruit. Another notable aspect of the Mollo people's agricultural traditions is their traditional planting method using a "*Suan*" (a wooden tool used to make holes in the ground for seeds), especially for wax gourd. They believe that using a crowbar will yield fewer fruits.

Furthermore, in Tutem Village, located in the Tobu-TTS District, the community has a tradition of gathering natural products such as Tree Honey (*Oih Hau*) or Stone Honey (*Oin Fatu*). This honey-gathering activity is unique because it begins and ends with traditional rituals, including the slaughtering of sacrificial animals, ceremonial speeches, and adherence to specific taboos. The Tutem people typically use chickens as sacrificial animals, and the slaughtering process occurs directly beneath the honeycomb tree or nearby.



**Figure 3.** Tree Honey Harvesting Activities in Tutem Village

Source : Author, 2023

Before starting the honey collection, the gatherer recites a phrase: "*Tig Manu Ataunis Pah Suf Intuan Naitit Oni Neo Ampainet Oni Amnakan Naun Niu Kolo Manu*," seeking permission from nature to collect the honey and hive. Once the gathering is complete, they express gratitude by reciting: "*Tasub Neto Uis Pah Uis Neno*," acknowledging the abundance of the honey harvest.

To protect themselves from honey bees, the Tutem people use a device called "*Suni*", made from dry tree twigs covered in leaves, which are burned to produce smoke that repels the bees. According to local tradition, women are prohibited from participating in honey-collecting activities or being near the honeycomb locations. This belief stems from the notion that a woman's presence could evoke 'jealousy' in the queen bee, potentially disrupting the honey-gathering process. Generally, the Tutem people utilize honey both as a commodity for trade and for household consumption. The honey production in Mollo is significant, supported by the presence of large trees that serve as hives and the humid conditions of the Mutis mountain region.

Nature serves as a vital source for meeting the needs of the Mollo people. In their daily lives, the Mollo people are deeply engaged in cultivating and utilizing natural products. Traditionally, they rely on these products as their primary food ingredients. A well-known phrase among the Mollo is "*Tmeup on Ate, Tah on Usi*," which translates to "work like a servant, but eat like a king." This saying reflects the strong connection between the Mollo people's agricultural practices and their food needs.

The Mollo people's agriculture thrives due to fertile land and dedicated farming, ensuring abundant food supplies. Their socio-cultural identity is deeply tied to these practices. Most produce is for personal consumption, with some reserved for replanting or sale. Traditional food management knowledge has been passed down for generations. From a young age, Mollo women learn traditional food management practices. One housewife from Ajaobaki Village shared her experience:

"Since childhood, we Mollo women have been taught by our mothers to cook. We started helping our mothers prepare food for our fathers and siblings in elementary school, usually beginning with simple dishes like cooking rice. As we grew older, we learned to cook more complex meals, including how to measure water, select spices, and recognize when food is properly cooked. We spent much time in the kitchen, assisting our mothers and learning at the same time. Similarly, when we have daughters, we will teach them as our mothers taught us." (Personal communication, March 23, 2023)

Mollo is a cultural group that practices a patriarchal cultural style, which influences the roles of women in managing household affairs, including food preparation for their families. From a young age, Mollo women learn cooking skills and domestic management under the guidance of their mothers. In Mollo culture, women play a significant role in overseeing domestic affairs, which includes planning the family's daily meals and managing food storage for both short- and long-term needs. The socio-cultural position of Mollo women is often centred around activities in the kitchen.

The Mollo people have a traditional kitchen known as "*Ume Kbbubu*" (Round House), constructed from bamboo, wooden poles, and reed grass. Historically, these traditional houses served as residences, spaces for preparing food, and storage for local agricultural products. Today, the *Ume Kbbubu* primarily functions as a kitchen and a place for storing food ingredients, while modern houses serve as the main residences.



Figure 4. Ume Kbbubu (Round House)  
Source : Author, 2023

The roundhouse is not only used for preparing traditional Mollo dishes but also serves as a venue for learning cooking techniques. The Mollo community boasts a rich array of cultural products, including a variety of local traditional dishes. This diversity allows them to process their agricultural products into many different kinds of food for consumption. Mollo women play a central role in food processing and meal preparation within their families, the smallest social unit. While traditionally responsible for food allocation, they exercise autonomy in managing and preparing meals. To meet daily food needs, housewives gather ingredients from their

gardens each morning and evening, ensuring sustainable consumption by setting aside portions for future use. They may go alone or with family members and also source food from long-term supplies stored in *Ume Kbubu*. In Mollo culture, harvests are carefully allocated, with portions reserved for future consumption and seeds for planting. A housewife from Ajaobaki Village shares her daily routine:

“Every day, I go to the garden to collect vegetables, sweet potatoes, or other ingredients for cooking so my husband and children can eat. Sometimes, I go alone, and other times, my husband or children help, especially during a big harvest. If I only need a few ingredients, I go alone. I also take supplies from the roundhouse, like corn, onions, or beans, to cook. I alternate between fresh garden produce and stored food to ensure we save supplies and have enough to eat. I handle all the cooking and guide the girls at home”. (Interviews on March 23, 2023)

Mollo housewives carefully consider food availability, variety, and nutrition when planning meals, ensuring their families receive balanced sustenance.



Figure. 5 Mollo women's local food processing activities  
Source : Author, 2023

Their ability to manage household food needs is a tradition passed down through generations. From a young age, Mollo girls learn food preparation and management from their mothers, skills that prepare them for their future households. This knowledge transfer occurs through daily domestic routines, with mothers actively involving daughters in kitchen tasks, reinforcing cultural traditions and practical skills.

### **Traditional Cuisine as a Commodity For Gastronomic Tourism.**

Bose Corn (*Pen Leot or Pen Bose*) is a staple traditional dish of the Mollo people. It consists of coconut milk, young shoots, thinly sliced fruit, pumpkin, corn, and a mix of rice beans, red beans, and peanuts, all boiled together. This dish is commonly found in the Mollo diet, often served with rice or as a special meal for guests and celebrations. More than just food, Pen Bose represents the cultural identity of the Mollo people and is recognized as a healthy carbohydrate source for Timorese communities, including the Mollo. The widespread consumption of Bose Corn is due to the availability of its ingredients and its practical yet nutritious preparation. High in carbohydrates, it provides the necessary energy for the Mollo people, who rely on intense physical labor in agriculture. Corn is a preferred alternative staple due to its abundance and ease of preparation.

Beyond Bose Corn, the Mollo people have a rich culinary tradition, creating various dishes from local ingredients. The preparation of Mollo traditional dishes remains authentic, involving a series of steps from natural cultivation to serving at the family table. This routine reflects their dependence on local agricultural products.



Figure. 6 Mollo's Traditional Meals  
Source : Author, 2023

One particularly unique dish is *Laku Tuke*, made from grated cassava and coconut mixed with honey and sugar. Traditionally, it is grilled in bamboo over hot coals for 2-3 hours, highlighting the distinctive cooking techniques of the Mollo people. For the Mollo, *Laku Tuke* is more than just food, it is a surviving ancestral tradition. However, one challenge in its preparation is the long cooking time required to achieve its distinctive taste. Traditional Mollo food preparation is not solely the responsibility of women but involves both men and women. In making *Laku Tuke*, tasks are divided: women prepare the raw dough, while men gather bamboo and manage the fire for grilling. More broadly, the long process of traditional Mollo cooking, from cultivation to the dining table is a collaborative effort, with no significant gender hierarchy.



Figure. 7. Laku Tuke  
Source : Author, 2023

### Food Sustainability In Mollo

Mollo food traditions are deeply rooted in narratives that span the entire agricultural process—from cultivation, maintenance, and harvesting to storage and preparation for consumption. Thus, traditional Mollo cuisine represents the culmination of their long-standing agricultural practices. The Mollo people have developed local wisdom to cope with food scarcity, particularly during famine seasons. Their ancestral knowledge emphasizes setting aside portions of each harvest for long-term needs. Rather than consuming their crops immediately, they reserve food stocks for future use—an agricultural practice that reflects their foresight in ensuring food security. Long before modern food security became a policy focus, the Mollo had already established strategies to prevent shortages.





Figure. 8 Corn Supply inside Ume Kbbubu  
Source : Author, 2023

Corn (Pena) is a key staple that can be stored for extended periods. Harvested corn is allocated for consumption, replanting, and long-term reserves. Traditionally, the Mollo store corn in the attic of their roundhouse, where smoke from the kitchen fire naturally preserves it. This ancestral technique remains effective in maintaining food quality and sustainability. Field surveys confirm that the Mollo people are generally resilient to food shortages, relying on stored reserves and alternative forest foods. For the Mollo, lean periods are manageable due to their ability to regulate consumption and sustain food supplies year-round. A housewife from Kualeu Village, explains how she ensures her family's nutrition:

"Our diet depends on food availability and creativity in meal planning. We ensure our family has nutritious food from the garden, stored supplies, or both. Daily, we gather tubers and vegetables, consuming in moderation to maintain a steady supply." (Interviewed on March 23, 2023).

The Mollo people's approach to food reflects a deep connection to nature and a sustainable system that consistently meets their nutritional needs. Their concern about famine is low due to abundant stored and cultivated food. Wise agricultural practices ensure long-term food security.

### **Empowerment of Mollo Women for Gastronomic Tourism Development.**

The agricultural practices of the Mollo people go beyond cultivation and food processing; they serve as a platform for passing down cultural values across generations. Mollo women play a key role in preserving local food traditions, which encompass knowledge, beliefs, and customs that define their cultural identity. Their involvement in food processing highlights the importance of maintaining these traditions, making women's empowerment in this field a priority at both local and national levels.

Ajaobaki Village exemplifies such efforts, where women, under the leadership of Meriana Pinat (55 years old), transform local food into marketable culinary products. She founded Suka Maju, a business that produces traditional Mollo food souvenirs, primarily tuber chips. Through this initiative, she has empowered at least 12 women, providing them with economic opportunities while preserving local food culture. The Ajaobaki Village government has supported this venture with financial aid, initially used to construct production facilities and purchase equipment. Geographically, Ajaobaki Village sits along the main route to the Mutis Nature Reserve, a growing tourist attraction. Conveniently located along this route, Suka Maju benefits from visitor traffic, making it a key destination for Mollo culinary souvenirs.

As head of the Ajaobaki Village PKK (Family Welfare Movement), Meriana Pinat emphasizes the importance of empowering local women, both for cultural preservation and economic growth. For KWT Suka Maju (Women Farmers Group), safeguarding traditional Mollo cuisine is not just about business—it is a commitment to honoring ancestral heritage and strengthening the Mollo people's cultural identity.



Figure 9. Meriana Pinat And her Suka Maju Farmer Women's Group  
Source : Author, 2023

### Comparative Case Studies in Ecofeminism

Several global ecofeminist case studies offer valuable comparisons to Mollo's experiences: Firstly, the Chipko Movement (India). The Chipko movement, led by rural Indian women in the 1970s, involved tree-hugging protests to prevent deforestation. These women, recognizing their dependence on forests for sustenance, fought against corporate exploitation. Their activism highlighted ecofeminism's core argument: women's intimate knowledge of natural resources positions them as key agents in environmental conservation (Aiyadurai et al., 2022; Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1986). The comparison to Mollo is like the Chipko women, the Mollo women's food processing skills connect them deeply to their environment. However, unlike the Chipko activists, who engaged in direct resistance, Mollo women are navigating economic empowerment within a patriarchal framework. Their challenge is not just ecological preservation but also gaining public economic roles.

Secondly, Green Belt Movement (Kenya). Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement (founded in 1977) empowered Kenyan women through reforestation programs, linking environmental sustainability with socio-economic independence (Lappé & Lappé, 2004; Maathai, 2007; Michaelson, 1994; Schell, 2013). Women were trained to plant trees, combat soil erosion, and engage in income-generating activities. In both Mollo and Kenya, women's knowledge of local ecosystems is invaluable. However, while the Green Belt Movement focused on reforestation, Mollo women's empowerment is centred around food-based economic opportunities. Both cases illustrate ecofeminist principles: women's environmental work fosters both sustainability and self-sufficiency.

Thirdly, The Indigenous Women of the Amazon (Brazil). Amazonian Indigenous women have been at the forefront of resisting deforestation and advocating for land rights. Rural women remain marginal in forest policy and elevated their role from invisibility to significance by fostering cross-sector collaboration, state engagement, and capacity building. Their work strengthens women's influence in sustainable forest management and conservation (Shanley et al., 2011). Comparison to Mollo is both groups engage in sustainable food practices, but Amazonian women emphasize land rights, whereas Mollo women's struggle involves expanding their economic agency while maintaining cultural traditions. In both cases, women act as guardians of traditional ecological knowledge.

### Implications for Women's Empowerment in Mollo

Empowering Mollo women in local food tourism supports ecofeminist goals of sustainability and gender equity. Lessons from global case studies highlight key areas for action:

- a) Policy support. Government and NGOs should facilitate training in food tourism and entrepreneurship.
- b) Community engagement. Encouraging male allies to support women's economic participation.
- c) Cultural preservation. Ensuring that modernization of food practices respects traditional knowledge.

- d) Environmental sustainability. Promoting eco-friendly food production and tourism strategies.

Women's empowerment in Mollo's local food promotion intersects with ecofeminist themes of sustainability, economic independence, and gender equity. Comparisons with global ecofeminist movements reveal that while Mollo women face unique socio-cultural barriers, their role in sustainable food production aligns with broader patterns of women's ecological stewardship. By integrating ecofeminist insights, policymakers and stakeholders can create inclusive strategies that empower Mollo women while preserving cultural and environmental heritage.

### Conclusion

This study highlights the crucial role of women in the development of gastronomic tourism in Mollo District, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Women's involvement, particularly in domestic activities such as cooking and food preparation aligns with ecofeminist perspectives that emphasize the intersection of gender, environment, and cultural preservation. Their contributions reinforce the significance of traditional knowledge and sustainable practices in shaping local food tourism.

However, while the findings affirm the importance of women's roles, the study also underscores the need for targeted capacity-building initiatives. Developing competent human resources, particularly among women, is essential for fostering a sustainable gastronomic tourism industry. Training in entrepreneurship, culinary innovation, and sustainable resource management would enhance their ability to contribute more effectively.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research contributes to discussions on ecofeminism and sustainable tourism by illustrating how gender roles intersect with environmental stewardship in the tourism sector. Nevertheless, limitations exist, including the study's geographic focus and sample size, which may restrict broader applicability. Future research should explore comparative analyses across different cultural contexts and investigate the long-term socio-economic impacts of women's participation in gastronomic tourism. By addressing these gaps, future studies can provide deeper insights into the dynamic relationship between gender, cultural heritage, and sustainable tourism development, ultimately shaping more inclusive and equitable tourism policies. Furthermore, this study underscores the essential role of Mollo women in sustainable gastronomic tourism, linking their contributions to ecofeminist principles. The comparison with other ecofeminist case studies reveals both commonalities and unique regional dynamics. Future research should explore long-term socio-economic impacts and broader comparative studies across diverse cultural contexts.

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